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Stop the Espionage Race

WASHINGTON

The medium-range missile treaty is all but wrapped up; short-range missile reduction is a sweetener just tossed in the deal; a space exploration treaty awaits signing at a summit; the old ABM treaty will be saved in the next year when a new treaty is agreed on to permit space-shield testing.

In this treaty-happy era, with both superpower leaders eager to distract attention from big domestic problems, the time has come to address an escalating source of tension.

We have to marshal our energies to put an end to the costly, mindless, debilitating Espionage Race. The superpowers already have stockpiled enough intelligence secrets about each other to scandalize the world a hundred times over.

Consider first the sheer waste of money caused by the Espionage Race. The superpowers alone spend \$43 billion a year on the overt and covert collection and evaluation of secret data. France's *force de snoop* and Britain's M.I. Fifth Man take down 2 percent of those nations' G.N.P. (Japan gains an economic advantage by unfairly refusing to share the intelligence burden.)

Next, examine the damage done to world peace by this mad spending. Diplomats in Moscow and Washington are unable to move into already-built fancy quarters because of the presence of built-in listening devices. Just when détente should be blooming, a U.S. Secretary of State is forced to denounce the penetration of our embassy grounds by K.G.B. agents, impugning the good faith of his interlocutors.

Not to be overlooked, even in this cynical world, is the moral effect of the Espionage Race. Moral equiva-

Negotiate the WET treaty.

lents like John Le Carré find no difference between Lubyanka and Langley; the shady techniques of illegal eavesdropping and amoral polygraph-torture breed in the intelligence services of democratic governments and corrupt their other institutions; virtuous young Russian women are forced to prostitute themselves in cold Marine sentry boxes.

And all for what? Do we have the slightest inkling of how tenuous is Mr. Gorbachev's hold in the Kremlin? Did the denizens of Dzerzhinsky Square have any warning about the C.I.A.'s use of the N.S.C.? With the money we spend on nuclear warheads, at least we get to hear a test bang now and then; with espionage spending, it seems all we get is defections, blown agents, uncovered moles and a trio of cuckolds that calls itself the Intelligence Oversight Board.

Unless the voices of reason are heard now, the world will be afflicted with an even more dangerous round of the Espionage Race. Technology breakouts are in the making. The Big Eyes satellites will see all from the sky; the Big Ear parabolic vacuum cleaners will be capable of picking up conversations in chief-of-state bedrooms; individual scents will be monitored and each one of us kept under constant computerized surveillance by the Big Nose.

That is why concerned Americans are joining with reformist Russians and embarrassed Israelis in recognizing that the time has come for a World Espionage Treaty (WET).

We are not naive; "gentlemen do not read each other's mail" is not our motto. WET's elements are realistic: No nation shall send an agent into another nation's embassy. Wiretapping shall be limited to office hours in the tapping country. No payment in excess of \$10,000 shall be made in any one year to a national of another country selling secrets. No nation may have more than 300 agents in another country at any time. Blackmail shall not be permitted in the subornation of agents, and sexual seducers must be blood-tested by the penetrating agency.

As this idea gains the support of professional spies, we can expect the usual Nitze-picking from the world's secrets merchants. Some real obstacles exist: a limitation on numbers of agents in the field would work a genuine hardship on the Soviet Union, and some grandfather clause would be needed to prevent a surge of unemployment.

Obstructionists and cold warriors are sure to say: What about verification? How do we know that some third-world spy service with a Sierra Hotel computer hacker won't clean our mainframe clock?

On-site inspection is the answer. An official mole in every spookery, pledged to pass back violations to headquarters, but not informed of the unofficial mole watching him.

Perhaps WET is an idea whose time has not yet come. But in the rush to make treaties, maybe we could slip it through. Why should spying be the only form of international conflict without a cottage industry advocating arms control? □